



DATE: March 10, 2025

BILL: HB 1481 – Disability Services – Adapted Vehicle Access Pilot Program - Established

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to submit this letter of support with amendments for HB 1481, which would establish within MDOD a pilot program that would solicit donations of adapted vehicles, vehicle modification and adaptation services, and funds on behalf of eligible individuals.

Transportation is a critical component of community integration for people with disabilities. Adapted vehicles can at times be prohibitively expensive. Maryland does provide financial support to drivers with disabilities through the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and offers paratransit and accessible public transportation. However, some individuals may not be able to access these supports and services. MDOD believes this pilot program has the potential to not only connect individuals to a needed resource but will allow MDOD to further document the benefits of, and barriers to, accessible vehicles and transportation.

MDOD believes it would be possible to leverage activities currently carried out by its Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP) to support the pilot program proposed by HB 1481. MDTAP oversees the Assistive Technology Loan Program, which provides low-interest loans to individuals and their families to purchase assistive technology, including vehicle adaptations and adapted vehicles. MDOD would be able to identify eligible individuals for the pilot program from among those who were unable to qualify for a financial loan for an adapted vehicle. MDTAP also operates the Maryland Assistive Technology Reuse (MATR) website, which allows people to post information about assistive technology that they would like to donate for free to others. MDTAP could use this platform to facilitate donations of adapted vehicles.

MDOD supports the amendments proposed by the bill sponsor. In particular, we note the amendments will give MDTAP the option of facilitating donations directly between donors and eligible individuals, without having to first take physical possession of the vehicles. This will minimize the expense, delays, and liability associated with a State agency having to transport, repair, store, transfer title, and/or enter the vehicle into State inventory.

I respectfully request a favorable report for this bill with the sponsor amendments. Thank you for your ongoing support and consideration of Maryland's disability community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol A. Beatty".

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary

